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ABSTRACT

The attempt by many urban school districts to develop African curricula creates a dilemma, because it usually places an African-centered program in a multicultural curriculum that is centered in the European-American educational tradition. Currently, some elements of an African and African-centered curriculum may be found in the multicultural education movement at some urban public schools. Independent schools owned and operated by blacks are developing African-centered programs with the assistance of a network of black study groups, lecture series, and national associations. All multicultural curricula must center discussions on the perspective of various cultural groups in the experience of one of those groups. In most contemporary classrooms, the curriculum has a European-American center. The intellectual tradition of European-American education is incapable of embracing an African frame of reference, forcing the following developments by black scholars and historians: (1) exposing the falsehood of the myth of African inferiority; (2) advocating the inclusion of African history and culture in school curricula; (3) developing independent educational institutions; (4) developing Black Studies programs in higher education; and (5) defending the new curriculum content in elementary and secondary schools. Future development of a true African-centered curriculum will depend on the following factors: (1) philosophical orientation; (2) institutional implementation; (3) consultant support; (4) scholarship; and (5) assessment. A list of 57 references is appended. (FMW)

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Center Shift

An African-Centered Approach for the Multicultural Curriculum

Joan Davis Ratteray

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Oswald M. T. Ratteray, Editor
Essays and Policy Studies Series

Center Shift

An African-Centered Approach for the Multicultural Curriculum

Joan Davis Ratteray

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Center Shift

An African-Centered Approach for the Multicultural Curriculum

Joan Davis Ratteray

In the current wave of education reform, many urban school systems in the United States, both public and private, either have implemented or are planning to introduce a multicultural curriculum. This is an attempt to include more information on the contributions made to our pluralistic society by members of different cultural groups. The African-American component of such a curriculum is often referred to as an "Afrocentric" or "African-centered," even though the use of these terms in a Eurocentric multicultural context is a misnomer.

Since several school systems are moving in this direction, and others are expected to follow in their footsteps, it is important that we examine the historical foundations of an African-centered curriculum, as manifested in current practice and in earlier historical developments, so that the lessons of history can better shape future efforts.

I. The Dilemma of an African-Centered Curriculum

As we enter the 1990s, there are no authentic African-centered curricula anywhere, but some of the elements that eventually may become part of such a curriculum already are evolving in elementary and secondary schools across the country. The attempt to develop such a curriculum, however, creates a dilemma, because it usually places an African-

centered program in a multicultural curriculum that is centered in the European-American educational tradition.

A. Current Practice

Elements of an African and African-centered curriculum may be found in the multicultural education movement at some government (or tax-supported "public") schools and in some independent schools, both of which draw upon the work of national and local African-American organizations.

1. Government School Programs

A brief survey of the African-American component of multi-cultural curricula in various school systems indicates that programs are known by different names and are in different stages of development. They have a number of elements in common, although other elements appear to be missing.

Existing Programs. African and African-American components may be found in the following programs:

Philadelphia, PA

A student protest in 1967 led to a two-year program for staff training (1967-1969). The first curriculum, "The Black Experience in America" was developed in 1970, and this was followed by five different versions, the most recent of which is called "African and Afro-American Studies" for Grades 1 to 12.

Newark, NJ

Newark published "Afro-American History: A Supplement to the Elementary School Curriculum" and "Afro-American History: The Social Studies Curriculum for Secondary Schools" in 1971. Both are being updated as a curriculum for prekindergarten to grade 12.

Indianapolis, IN

Staff awareness and resource development began in 1975. In May 1979, the school board passed Resolution No. 7123, approving a Black history policy statement. The program was funded in 1986 and the first curriculum was implemented in

1988. Indianapolis also developed an African-American history discussion group with voluntary attendance by teachers, which began August 13, 1989.

Portland, OR

The Multnomah School District developed its program in "Multicultural/ Multiethnic Education" as a result of action by the Black United Front and the Desegregation Monitoring Advisory Committee. The African-American component is built on a set of baseline essays which were conceived in 1981. Five essays in draft form were circulated widely in 1986, and the final curriculum was implemented in 1988.

South Carolina

In 1984, the state passed the South Carolina Improvement Act which, among other things, required that Black history be included in the social studies curriculum. Funding was provided in 1987 for the "Black History Project" which has three aspects: 1) South Carolina Black history for grades 3 and 8; 2) Teaching about Africa, in grades 4, 6, 7, and in courses on world history and geography for high school; and 3) African-American history in grades 1, 2 and 5, and in history, government and economics courses for high school. The curriculum is being written by teachers who are nominated to attend a summer institute and receive graduate credit.

California

In 1985, curriculum revision efforts in the state produced a framework for a multicultural curriculum in social science, mathematics, science and reading. The Center for Applied Cultural Studies in Educational Achievement was established in 1989 as a collaborative partnership between the state department of education and the California state university system. The applied culture component will reflect an Afro-centric approach to learning and achievement.

New York State

In 1987, a Task Force on Minorities was created to review existing curricula. They submitted a report to the Board of Regents in July 1989 entitled, "A Curriculum of Inclusion,"

which discussed the curricula from the perspective of each cultural group. On February 15, 1990, the board voted to revise the state's history curriculum but did not adopt the report.

Atlanta, GA

In November 1988, the school board made it a priority to develop an African-centered curriculum. In December of that year, the superintendent accelerated the program planning for an African-American studies program, providing objectives and a time line. Staff development was implemented in 1989.

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., began to develop its "Afro-centric" curriculum with a symposium held in April 1989. The initiative, now known as the "African-centered Education Initiative," has two stages: a "Year of Awareness" (1989-90) and a "Year of Commitment" (1990-1991). A grant of $150,000 was received from the Rockefeller Foundation to develop lesson plans and activities.

Camden, NJ

In 1985-86, a report was prepared outlining a plan for the infusion of African-American information into social studies at the secondary level. In 1988-89, a district-wide "Afro-centric" committee was established and began developing baseline essays in five disciplines. The also committee will discuss the inclusion of the Latino experience. Information in selected areas will be infused into the curricula later in the year.

At least five other jurisdictions are known to have an African-American component in some stage of development. They are Buffalo, New York; Broward County, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Teaneck, New Jersey.

Common Elements. The various African-American components follow one of three approaches and have several other common elements, including the consultants they use, their content and its relationship to the existing curriculum, their impact on the students, and their need for teacher development.

There are at least three approaches to structuring the content of African-American curricula, although they do not represent mutually-exclusive categories. The two oldest programs in this survey were found in the Philadelphia and Newark school systems. They appear to be eclectic in their approach in that they incorporate a broad spectrum of African and African-American history. They are presented in outline form as lesson plans, with a bibliography, and some of them include activities for the development of specific skills.

The second approach, introduced in Portland, Oregon, and now widely disseminated presents the story of African people, ancient and modern. One of its major parts describes the impact on civilization of early man in the Nile Valley. It draws heavily on the research and writings of scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop, and one of its leading spokesmen is Asa G. Hilliard III. The Portland model uses lesson plans and contains a bibliogaphy but features substantive baseline essays in six disciplines (art, language arts, mathematics, science, social science and music).

The third approach, being developed for public schools in Camden, New Jersey, revolves around the theory of "Afrocentricity," which developed by Molefi Kete Asante (1980; 1987) and inspired by the early writings of Wade Nobles, Maulana Karenga and Leachem Semaj.

The "Afrocentricity" approach emphasizes the study of concepts, issues and behaviors among African peoples in Africa, the Americas and the West Indies. It encourages the use of this information by individuals so that they can be reconnected to and recentered on positive African values (Asante, 1980; 1987).

Some of the leading scholars who have served as consultants to varlous school systems on the introduction of an African-American component include Hunter Havelin Adams III, Molefi Asante, Pat A. Browne, Jacob H. Carruthers, John Henrik

Clarke, Michael D. Harris, Asa G. Hilliard III, Leonard Jeffries, Carolyn Leonard and Wade W. Nobles.

Although the African and African-American components of multicultural curricula contain the traditional areas of social studies, science and mathematics, language arts, art and music, two exceptions include foreign languages spoken by Africans (i.e. French and Spanish), as well as "health, athletics, physical education and safety" (including dance). These are explicit attempts to *infuse* or *include* African and African-American information into the existing curriculum. In the higher grades, there are instances in which a separate course is offered in Afro-American history as an elective.

These programs are designed to have an impact on students by enhancing their self- esteem and their pride in an African and African-American heritage. Some go even further. Portland, for instance, explicitly states that its purpose is to show that "no one geo-cultural group is innately inferior or superior to another." Philadelphia, on the other hand, stressed the enhancement of skills for self-development.

Finally, all programs have a component for staff development which is intended to make staff more aware of the content, materials and other resources that are appropriate for African-centered classroom activities. The format for awareness sessions generally includes lectures by practitioners and noted scholars. The emphasis is on voluntary participation in these teacher-development programs, although some districts do provide incentives for participation.

Missing Elements. Three factors appear to be missing. First, none of the programs is completely African-centered, although each makes important steps in this direction. They remain grounded in the European-American educational tradition.

Second, there is little presentation of the historical legacy behind attempts to include African and African-American history and culture in the curricula of American schools. These contemporary movements are not isolated events that occur in a particular school system, nor are they limited either to elementary or secondary or higher education. They in fact owe a debt to the work of many previous scholars and to developments in different periods of history.

Third, none of the existing programs have been evaluated. For example, the Philadephia program has been in existence without evaluation for 20 years. Furthermore, the newer programs do not appear to include an evaluation component or even a discussion of which instruments might be most suitable for such an evaluation. Nor is there available in published form, suitable for outside review, any analysis of teacher attitudes toward the existing programs or recommendations from teachers on how to improve these efforts.

2. Activities in Independent Education

Several elements of an African-centered curriculum also may be found in the curricula at some, but not all, the independent schools that are owned and operated by African Americans. These indigenous institutions are developing their curricula with the support of two national organizations, the Council of Independent Black Institutions and the Institute for Independent Education.

Council of Independent Black Institutions. The Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) is a technical assistance and teacher training organization serving over 20 member schools and others. These schools often are referred to as having a "pan-African" orientation.

CIBI grew out of concerns that educators, parents and others shared about the need to have community control of public schools. Members of the National Association of Afro-American Educators had been working since 1968 to "change educational systems and processes or create new ones so that they provide for the self-realization of Black students taking into account the question of: Who they are? Where they came from? Where they are going? How they will get there?" ("Preston Wilcox," 1968). Some of these educators, together with members of community-based organizations, then agreed on the need for a "national Black educational system."

As a result, 28 people, including representatives of 14 independent schools for African Americans, created CIBI with the mandate "to establish a uniform pattern of educational achievement devoted to correct political objectives and

dedicated to excellence" (Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1987). In the summer of 1972, CIBI held a five-day national meeting in Frogmore, South Carolina, at which the members confirmed the initial mandate and outlined the principles, policies and programs of the organization.

Today, CIBI sponsors an annual teacher-training institute and a science fair which focus learning and teaching objectives on quality academic excellence within an African-centered cultural, historical and political context. CIBI also has published a social studies curriculum guide, which includes academic objectives for various grades from pre-primary through middle school levels. This guide applies at each grade level CIBI's definitions of and criteria for evaluating the family, the community, the nation (meaning Africans in America), and the race (Council of Independent Black Institutions, 1990).

Institute for Independent Education. The Institute for Independent Education (IIE), founded in 1984, is a technical assistance and policy development organization. It documents, promotes and raises funds for the activities of independent schools that serve primarily African-American, Hispanic/Latino-American, American-Indian and Asian-American children. The Institute conducts basic research, explores public policy issues, operates technical assistance programs, and trains teachers. It also studies curriculum content, testing and evaluation, and issues in the development of African and African-American curricula.

An early research project, *Dare to Choose*, surveyed over 200 independent schools and a sample of 399 parents. It found that one of the four major reasons why parents send their children to these schools was to find an environment that is culture-affirming for African-American children (Ratteray and Shujaa, 1987). The research also found that while some parents appear to be confused, other parents have clear expectations about how standards of excellence and cultural nurturing relate to each other in teaching African-American children.

The IIE's second major effort was the publication of a series of *Essays on Liberty*, probing some of the foundations for an African-centered curriculum. The liberty series examines some

of the philosophical assumptions that distinguish African from Western thought; some of the values that motivate individuals, families and institutions in traditional African society; how the legacy of cultural continuity enabled diasporic Africans to pursue freedom in the Americas; how the oral tradition, jazz and literature of African Americans reflect a push for freedom; and the long struggle to develop independent schools and preserve free African-American minds.

3. Study Groups, Lecture Series and Associations

A network of study groups, lecture series and national associations in the African-American community provides many of the consultants, research and impetus behind the development of African and African-American elements in multicultural curricula. These various contributions are expected to lead toward the eventual development of African-centered curricula.

Study Groups and Lecture Series. Educators who are involved in developing African-centered curricula often draw support and leadership from the organizers of many study groups and formal lecture series that are designed for African-American parents, teachers, policymakers and scholars.

Some of the leading organizations sponsoring study groups and lecture series are the First World Alliance, located in New York; the Nubian study group, sponsored across the country by the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations; the Institute for Karmic Guidance and the Pyramid bookstore, separate institutions in Washington, D.C; the Institute of Positive Education and the African American Book Center in Chicago; and the Afro-American Cultural Center (Us) in Los Angeles.

These and other contemporary groups follow in the footsteps of the 19th century literary and education societies, the 20th century study groups promoted by Marcus Garvey, and the various groups that emerged during what is known as the Harlem Renaissance. They have renewed public interest in African and African-American heritage and culture by discussing issues, displaying and selling published materials, and conducting tours of relevant historical sites in America, Africa

and elsewhere. Some of the groups listed here and others are also involved with independent schools in elementary, secondary and adult education.

National Associations. There are numerous African-American associations which sponsor conferences, related academic journals and other publications. They have had a profound effect on efforts to develop an African-centered education and continue to be resources for educators today.

An early institution was the American Teachers Association, which traced its roots to 1903 but now has merged with a mainstream organization, the National Education Association. Another more recent organization was the Institute for the Black World, and some of its records may be found at the Schomburg Center in New York.

The oldest extant institution is the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, founded in 1915 by the late Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Other organizations were started in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of them include the African Heritage Association, the Association of Black Psychologists, the National Council on Black Studies, and the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations.

The founders of the African Heritage Association, including scholars like John Henrik Clarke, left the mainstream African Studies Association. Their departure made it possible for African-American scholars to release to the world the body of information that for so long had been filtered through the scholarship of Whites. By presenting this information from an African and African-American perspective, they have set the stage for building an African-centered curriculum and pedagogy.

The Association of Black Psychologists also has helped to establish this framework. They refuted the research paradigms, theoretical formulations, and findings of White psychologists that had been used to formulate such public policies as compensatory education. Rather than defining African-American youth from the oppressive perspective of deficiencies and pathology, the Black psychologists focused on the psychological well-being and family strengths of the African-American community. This association also has contended that the experiences and behaviors of African Americans cannot be

measured withinstruments and procedures that were developed and validated with a European or European-American bias.

The members of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations are actively engaged in what they describe as the "awesome and on-going task of rescuing and reconstructing classical African civilization and posing it as a paradigm for ever higher levels of human life" (Karenga, 1990). They are concerned not only with research on life and thought in Ancient Egypt (Kemet) but with establishing its relevance to contemporary issues facing African Americans. In education, they stress the need to create an "independent, African centered antidote to centuries of miseducation" for the masses of "African Americans and other people of African descent worldwide" (Hilliard, 1990).

B. The Problem of Centering

The term "multicultural" has acquired no uniform and widely-accepted definition in American education, and its meaning still is evolving. Current efforts to develop multi-cultural curricula, however, create a dilemma because they do not settle the question of the center or base from which those curricula are structured. In addition, many educators in government schools increasingly refer to their programs as "Afrocentric" or "African-centered" when, in certain multicultural contexts, this use presents an inherent contradiction.

While a multicultural curriculum involves discussions of academic subjects from the perspective of various cultural groups, the center of these discussions inevitably is located in the experience of *one* of those cultural groups. Thus, it is possible to have a multicultural curriculum with a European and European-American center *or* a multicultural curriculum with an African and African-American center.

On the other hand, there is no such thing as a multicultural curriculum with a multicultural center. Approaches that claim to reject the dominance of any one cultural perspective by default adopt the Eurocentric perspective that initially selected the curriculum content and, as Banks (1988) notes, gave it the present "structure, goals, and salient characteristics."

1. A Eurocentric Multicultural Approach

The need for a multicultural curriculum has been stated by one advocate, as follows:

> Individuals who know the world only from their own cultural and ethnic perspectives are denied important parts of the human experience and are culturally and ethnically encapsulated...Just as a fish is unable to appreciate the uniqueness of his aquatic environment, so are many Anglo-American children unable to fully see and appreciate the uniqueness of their cultural characteristics. A key goal of multi-ethnic education is to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures (Banks, 1977).

The multicultural concept was created for the benefit of European and European-American children, who have a legitimate historical need for such a curriculum. Most schools, on the other hand, always have taught African and African-American children about themselves from the perspective of Europeans.

Granted, it might be helpful if African Americans could see themselves through the eyes of Hispanics, American Indians and other in the American mosaic, but the main problem is that most African American children do not have the solid foundation that comes from being grounded in the land of their ancestors. Therefore, they have no basis from which to appreciate a multicultural curriculum offering the perceptions of other groups that may have such a cultural foundation.

Banks (1988) describes five types of multi-cultural curricula, lying along a continuum from the least amount of infusion to the most intense level of infusion. The two most important for this discussion are in the middle of the continuum and represent what he calls the "Additive Approach" and the "Transformation Approach." The first adds or integrates ethnic content, but the central curriculum content "remains unchanged." The other claims to infuse perspectives, frames of reference, and content for the purpose of studying "the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society."

He points out, for example, that a discussion of the American Revolution would cover the "various and sometimes divergent meanings" of the Revolution to the "Anglo Revolutionaries, the Anglo Loyalists, Afro-Americans, Indians, and the British" in

order to gain "a thorough understanding" of it as a "significant event in U.S. history."

This so-called "Transformation Approach" is not in fact a transformation. The center of the curriculum has NOT shifted, and the various approaches remain on the same continuum.

In contemporary classrooms, the curriculum has a European and European-American center. The subject of the American Revolution can be presented so that the perspective of each cultural group, including African-Americans, is discussed sequentially. This need not change the center of the discussion, which usually is fixed on the revolt of one set of Europeans against the values and policies of another set of Europeans. Such a Eurocentric multicultural approach may include a discussion of how African Americans or American Indians viewed the events, but it does not change the center of the larger social agenda for the dominant European-American rebels.

2. An African-Centered Multicultural Approach

To change the center of the discussion and place it squarely on African people, at home and in the diaspora, the story of the American Revolution would become instead a story of African people who have lived on the American continent but who have had their own deep historical roots in the pursuit of liberty. In fact, since the days of precolonial Africa, their tradition of nation-building has been deeply rooted in their right to the land through membership in the family, in their lineage and in the chiefdom (Mukenge, 1988). In addition, the children of African traditionally have been grounded in concepts of self-reliance in order to achieve freedom, "both for themselves personally and for the community as a whole."

Africans in the Americas then were confronted with a decision on whether or not to join forces with people from another culture, and to build a new nation of which they could be a part. A major stumbling block in the African commitment to an American future was the fundamental difference between an African view of liberty and the dominant view of Europeans, especially relating to the definition of self in relation to others (Mudimbe, 1988).

These Africans in the Americas soon found that nation-building was defined only through pre-established Eurocentric institutions — political, economic, religious and otherwise — and there was no room for African Americans to draw on their own African traditions and experiences in the pursuit of liberty. Instead, African Americans were forced to describe "the elusiveness of freedom," expressing themselves in written, sung and instrumental texts that included slave autobiographies, oratory, the spiritual, the "ringshout" and jazz (Fitch, 1988).

They also began to build their own community organizations and educational institutions and to explore several options in curriculum development, educational objectives and pedagogical strategies that often defied the constrictions being imposed on them by mainstream American educators in order to obliterate the spirit of African Americans (Ratteray, 1988).

An African-centered curriculum would *begin* by identifying African strengths and showing that while they were systematically under attack by an opposing culture, they survived and triumphed because of the powerful impact of what Clarke (1988) describes as "cultural continuity." These cultural links emerged among African peoples in South America, the Caribbean and the United States and eventually brought many of them together in the pursuit of liberty.

The curriculum would demonstrate that, through acts of survival, Africans have contributed to the "success" of the dominant culture, even if at the expense of important parts of their own culture. In addition, it would include a discussion of what some call the universality of the African experience. Since many scholars have contended that the continent of Africa is the birthplace of the human experience in all its diversity, and all cultures can gain a better understanding of themselves by studying from an African-centered perspective.

An African-centered multicultural curriculum, therefore, would provide not merely an understanding of the diversity of other cultures, but it would convey to all students a deeper understanding of the essential Africanness of each culture.

II. Historical Developments Toward an African-Centered Curriculum

The intellectual tradition of European-American education generally has not considered African contributions to world civilization as significant and, by definition, is incapable of embracing an African frame of reference for examining knowledge (Ratteray, 1988). As African Americans searched for an African-centered perspective, their relationship to the Eurocentric tradition has produced tensions in five major areas.

First, African Americans have been compelled to expose the falsehood of African "inferiority." Second, both lay and trained historians have had to assume responsibility for advocating the inclusion of African history and culture as a legitimate part of the curriculum in schools. Third, in spite of tremendous odds against survival, African Americans have pushed to develop independent educational institutions as a means of developing the African-American community. Fourth, "Black studies" programs in higher education have evolved in a way that many find disappointing. Fifth, as the search for new curriculum content and a new perspective has expanded to elementary and secondary education, advocates of traditional Eurocentric learning have begun to demonstrate a certain uneasiness.

A. The Falsehood of African "Inferiority"

The constant struggle by African Americans to become a part of the mainstream has been shaped by the need to expose the falsehood of African "inferiority." These efforts to defend the intellectual integrity of an entire people have been greatly enhanced by the fact that Africans and Africans in the diaspora have traveled extensively. Their intellectual cross-fertilization has spanned the seas, the continents and national political boundaries.

The view that Africans and African Americans are "inferior" permeates almost all aspects of European and European-American society, including the dominant cultural values and language, as well as the Eurocentric religious, political, economic and educational institutions. Drake (1987, chapters 1 and 2) outlines some of the many systematic efforts, in written reports and public oratory, that attempted to document the alleged racial " inferiority" of African Americans.

The European view of Africa was necessary in order to justify colonial domination. Therefore, as W. E. Abraham notes:

> Africa was not to Europeans a continent with its own integrity. Education was therefore devised not to serve African societies and at the same time preserve the harmony of society; it was devised to strengthen the service of Africa to Europe. It was therefore given an austere shape and a minimal content. [Abraham, 1962, pp. 192-193]

The beginnings of the American republic were heavily burdened by the doctrine of African inferiority. Thomas Jefferson, one of the most respected Founding Fathers, wrote:

> This unfortunate difference of color, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people...I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowment both of body and mind [Jefferson, 1982, p. 74].

On the other hand, some Europeans, such as Brissot de Warville and Henri Grégoire, held different views (Quarles, 1988, p. 114). De Warville, in his *New Travels in United States Performed in 1788*, challenged these theories of inferiority. In 1810, Grégoire *An Enquiry Concerning the Intellectual and Moral Faculties, and Literature of Negroes; Followed with an Account of the Life and Works of Fifteen Negroes and Mulattoes, Distinguished in Science, Literature and the Arts*. Grégoire was used widely by Blacks in their defense against claims of mental incompetence.

The widespread belief in African "inferiority" forced Africans at home and in the diaspora to assume a defensive posture. It consumed a great deal of their creative energy with the need continually to expose the falsity of this belief. Many became world travelers, not only carrying their message across the seas but using information from abroad to inspire and motivate

those at home to free themselves from the intellectual shackles imposed by Europeans.

One such friend of liberty was William Wells Brown (c. 1814-1884), who used his knowledge of early African history to refute the current falsehoods about Africa (Brown, 1969). He was born a slave in Kentucky and, after 20 years of enslavement, escaped to freedom and became one of the most prolific writers of the 19th century. He also wrote the first novel published by an African American and produced three major volumes on Black history (Ripley, 1985, p. 154). In a letter to Frederick Douglass, Brown wrote about his visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities and expressed his regret that:

> ...so few of our race can find a place within their walls. And this being the fact, I see more and more the need of our people being encouraged to turn their attention more seriously to self-education, and thus to take a respectable position before the world, by virtue of their own cultivated minds, and moral standing (Ripley, 1985, p. 303).

For example, J. W. C. Pennington (1807-1870) was barred from studies at Yale University and later, on one of his travels, secured an honorary doctorate from the University of Heidelberg. Pennington said he did not want the degree "on account of any personal merits nor personal distinction [but] to encourage the entire colored population of the United States" (Ripley, 1985, p. 182).

Pennington wrote one of the earliest books on African-American history called *A Textbook of the Original History of the Colored People*. He also used his insights on history to promote his ideas on how to establish an effective school system for African Americans in the United States.

Martin R. Delany, the author, physician and 19th century leader of the "Back to Africa" movement, along with his colleague, Robert Campbell, lectured extensively on "Africa and the African Race." They encouraged Blacks to find their destiny outside of the Americas or by returning to the Continent of Africa and using the growth of Africa to continue the legacy of the first Egyptians.

In one of Delany's essays, "The International Policy of the World Toward the African Race," (Griffith, 1975, p. 102) Delaney argued that Europeans justified slavery by claiming Africans were inferior. If the Europeans could justify to the

world that the Africans had made no contribution to world civilization and that they were in fact subhuman, this would be a good rationalization for continuing the cruel and highly profitable slave trade. Delany felt that the time had come for a Black leader to expose the falsehood that Africans were inferior and took it upon himself to defend the honor of the African race. Delany stated:

> I should not feel, what ever I may have effectively done, that my work had been more than half completed, did I not, as a wronged and outraged son of Africa, give to the world this crowning act of infamy against a people, the facts of which have ever been closely concealed, and even denied, while thousands of the world's good people have no knowledge that such facts ever transpired. [Griffith, 1975, pp. 102-103]

Delany maintained that the first Egyptians were Black men, and they were the greatest men of ancient times. He insisted that the African contribution to world civilization was his humanism. The African's ability to endure the conditions of slavery, to adapt and survive the ordeal of slave life was viewed as evidence of his strength.

Delany and Campbell also went to Africa to seek economic opportunities for the sale of cotton. They believed that if they could cultivate a market for cotton in the Niger Valley, that would alleviate the need for slavery in the Americas.

Another 19th century author, educator and spokesman for an African-centered perspective was Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912). Blyden was born on the island of St. Thomas and moved to New York, but he was refused admission to Rutgers Theological Seminary because of he was of African descent. Finally, he emigrated to Liberia in 1851, lived there for 20 years and then divided his time between Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Blyden agreed with Delany, contending that for 360 years, the skills and industry of Africans were largely responsible for the development of the Western Hemisphere, while the African countries themselves were not strong enough to defend themselves against the Europeans.

Blyden saw the need for "some African power, some great center of the race where our physical, pecuniary and intellectual strength may be collected" and then have an impact on other nations (Esedebe, 1980, pp. 18-34). He also pressed for

the establishment of a West African university and an African Christian church to be run by Africans.

These late nineteenth and early twentieth century leaders were preachers, educators and activists who were seeking to liberate Africans at home and in the diaspora not only from physical bondage but from intellectual, spiritual and cultural bondage as well. Their travels and writings helped form the nucleus for the contemporary movement to develop an African-centered perspective.

Clarke (1988) contends that this pursuit of freedom, which took many forms and spanned many eras, was actually an expression of African cultural continuity that bound together Africans in the Caribbean, South America, the United States and Canada.

In fact, beginning as early as the eve of the American Revolution, actual contact and collaboration between freedmen in the Caribbean and Africans in North America "could have been the first inkling of the concept that later was identified as Pan-Africanism." This cultural continuity and contact has given Africans everywhere the strength to move "fighting, hoping and bleeding into the 20th century."

B. Influence of Lay and Trained Historians

Both lay and trained historians have had a pivotal role in providing the historical evidence supporting an African-centered curriculum. They not only organized an approach to the study of African and African-American heritage and culture, but they provided texts and other materials for use by teachers and students.

Four scholars were the most highly visible in the movement to effect change in classrooms. They were Arthur Schomburg, W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Willis N. Huggins. Other efforts to organize a systematic approach to the study of African American history and culture are documented by Sinnette (1989, chapter 2). For example, the American Negro Historical Society was an organization in Philadelphia which catered to the interests of many lay historians, and the American Negro Academy was located in Washington, D.C. Both began in 1897.

Schomburg, a bibliophile and self-taught historian, was associated with the American Negro Historical Society. In his 1913 address to a summer class of teachers at Cheyney Institute, formerly known as the Institute for Colored Youth, he pointed out that there was enough known about the contributions of Blacks to justify having "a chair of Negro history" (Schomburg, 1913). He gave examples of achievements in many areas and urged African Americans to support a scholar who could "give us the background for our future."

On another occasion, Schomburg urged teachers "not to revolutionize...but to simply amend [the curriculum] to include the practical history of the Negro from the dawn of civilization to the present time" (Sinnette, 1989, p. 48). This is one of the early glimpses of the infusion concept.

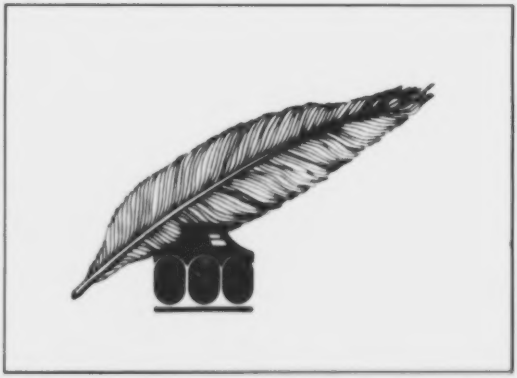
DuBois was associated with the American Negro Academy, which included primarily trained historians whose objective was "the defense of the Negro against vicious assaults" (Drake, p. xvii), and a great deal of DuBois' own work was devoted to the education of African Americans. He published *The Negro* in 1915, which pulled together in a scholarly fashion some of the available information on Egypt and Africa. He later wrote that the "leading motif" or guiding force in the development of a knowledge base for African Americans would have to be an understanding of cultural life (DuBois, 1973).

DuBois made a significantn contribution when he set the parameters for discourse on African-American thought by showing that through constant vigil, African Americans must assume the responsibility for their own intellectual uplift. His extensive writings, which stretched from 1896 to 1961, provide nourishment for all young scholars who must find their niche in building an African-centered curriculum and pedagogy.

In the 1920s, DuBois questioned the condition of education for African Americans in what now are called traditionally Black colleges, discussing issues such as White-controlled management, a lack of individual freedom for students, and the structure of college curricula (Wolters, 1975, p. 276). His perspectives helped spark campus riots across the United States (Wolters, 1975, p. 18).

During the same decade, DuBois introduced *The Brownies' Book*. This monthly magazine was published for only 24 months, but it introduced young children to African-American scholars who wrote on history, literature, geography and the issues of the day as they affected African Americans.

Another prominent African American who helped systematize the study of his people from a position of strength was Carter G. Woodson. His *Miseducation of the Negro* (Woodson, 1933) has been a benchmark for analyzing what has gone wrong in the education of African Americans and what can be done to correct the problems. In 1915, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Through this association, he inaugurated the first "Negro history week," which later became "Black history month."



Woodson published textbooks and materials for African-American children, which he disseminated through the association he founded, as well as through his affiliation with the National Negro Teachers Association, later known as the American Teachers Association (Perry, 1975, pp. 189-207).

Another historian and educator who presented texts and materials for youth during the 1930s was Willis N. Huggins, a member of the Department for Social Studies of the New York City schools. In association with a self-trained historian, John G. Jackson, Huggins published *An Introduction to African Civilizations*. This book gave pedagogical guidelines for teachers on how to approach the study of Ancient Egypt, Ethiopia, Lybia and Nubia.

Although there is some question about the historical accuracy of the Huggins and Jackson book, Drake describes it as historically significant because it raised the consciousness of young African Americans during the late Depression years and the early days of World War II (Drake, 1987, p. 317). This book, together with a subsequent work by Jackson and several by Joel A. Rogers, may have led to the great outpouring in the 1960s of student concern for curriculum content.

A significant milestone in the 1960s was the emergence of Nguzo Saba, a value system that emphasizes *Umoja*, unity; *Kujichagulia*, self-determination; *Ujima*, collective work and responsibility; *Ujamaa*, cooperative economics; *Nia*, purpose; *Kuumba*, creativity; and *Imani*, faith (Kunjufu, 1984). The Nguzo Saba, and its derivative, the celebration of Kwanzaa, were created by Maulana Karenga from his study of the traditional African experience. Karenga points out that he introduced these principles because African Americans need to have a "meaningful interpretation of life" and to organize themselves using seven fundamental areas of culture: spirituality, history, social organization, economic organization, political organization, creative production, and ethos (Alexander, 1989).

A number of other authors have contributed substantially to the development of curricula that are centered on the African and African-American experience. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Drusilla Dunjee Houston, an African American and self-trained historian, wrote an volume on the ancient history of Africa which has influenced the thinking of many educators (Houston, 1985).

Cheikh Anta Diop, a scholar from Senegal, completed some pioneering research and redefined the history of Egypt as African in origin, rather than as a part of Europe or Asia (Diop, 1959; 1974).

Chancellor Williams was an African American who devoted himself to reclaiming the historical record of Africa (Williams, 1974), and he was among the first of the post World-War II scholars to study the Nile Valley civilizations (Drake, 1987, p. 318).

Yosef A. ben-Jochannan is an historian whose extensive publications and lectures in the United States and overseas

continue to establish him as an authority on Ancient Egypt (ben-Jochannan, 1970; 1988).

Ivan Van Sertima also is a scholar, author and popular lecturer, and his works emphasize the contributions of Africans, past and present, to civilizations in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas (Van Sertima, 1983; 1985; 1986).

C. Developing Independent Institutions

African Americans always have sought to control and operate their own institutions, including schools. The earliest educational institutions actually maintained an African frame of reference, although in later years, the focus changed for economic reasons.

Late eighteenth century pioneers such as Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in Philadelphia, and Prince Hall in Boston, were among early African-Americans who started independent schools. It was essentially the lack of access for Blacks to participate in established public institutions that forced these African Americans to seek their own education. There was, nevertheless, a persistent thrust to develop an African American frame of reference for education, which was expanded between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

The organizations that they created to promote Black schools often retained the word "African" in their name. Richard Allen, for example, defined many of his institutions in African terms, such as the African Society for Education and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. By placing the word "African" prominently in the mind's eye, the African connection was temporarily sustained. African Americans were conditioned through their institutions to remember their African land base and to recognize the fact that their history did not begin with slavery in America. These efforts remained an important testament to their independent thought in the pursuit of liberty.

Several education societies also developed independent schools as part of their self- initiated activities to sustain an educational climate in African-American communities. They include the Resolute Beneficial Society (1818) in the District of Columbia, the Minor Society (1810), the Pennsylvania

Augustine Society for the Education of People of Color (1818), and the Moral Reform Society (1848).

Extreme pressure from the legal system, prohibiting the teaching and learning of African Americans and the threat of imprisonment if caught breaking the law isolated the masses of African Americans from the educational mainstream. Yet, these educational societies and independent efforts to create schools stood in stark contrast to the general degraded educational climate for African Americans.

Early in the twentieth century, people like Booker T. Washington, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nannie Helen Burroughs began to develop an institutional base that they believed would influence the economic base for African American youth. At the same time, there was an attempt to create an educational environment that was supportive in view of the conditions they faced at the time.

Booker T. Washington believed that industrial education was better for the masses of African Americans who were located primarily in the South. When he established Tuskegee Institute, he was interested in two questions about the utility of education: what would young people find to do when they returned home and on what industries did they and their parents depend for self-support? (Whitney, 1935, p. 5)

Washington was responsible for starting several independent schools throughout the South, both through his own efforts and through the work of his students. However, his thrust in independent education was to secure the economic survival of African Americans through vocational courses and practica.

Other educators, such as Nannie Helen Burroughs, were interested in vocational education, relating it to the professionalization of women in the workforce. Charlotte Hawkins Brown primarily was interested in college preparatory work, but she was forced to push for industrial education in order to sustain the interest of her philanthropic sources. These donors were interested in providing funding only if industrial education was an integral part of the school program.

In the midst of the economic push for independent education, some educators continued to focus on Africa. Just as certain textbooks in the 19th century infused African and African-American history into the curriculum, there was some

effort during the early part of the 20th century to utilize an African frame of reference in order to motivate African Americans in academic pursuits. Nevertheless, few educators focused specifically on developing a completely African-centered pedagogy and curriculum.

Marcus Garvey developed what he called "a course of African Philosophy" and used it in at least two schools he created, the Booker T. Washington University in Harlem, New York, and Liberty University in Claremont, Virginia (Martin, 1985, pp. xix-xx).

Black history also was promoted by The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam. The first Muslim independent school began in Detroit in 1932, and two years later in Chicago as adult education schools. A group of elementary and secondary schools later were developed throughout the United States. Known as Sister Clara Muhammad schools, they were named after the wife of The Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

The curriculum in Muslim schools went beyond reading, writing and arithmetic and included the "history of the black nation." It was designed to encourage the African American "to think for himself, to inquire into his past, to be proud of his heritage prior to slavery, and to have a desire to become independent economically or otherwise" (Essein-Udom, 1962).

The historian, Lerone Bennett, placed on the shoulders of African-American educators the responsibility for change. He urged them to develop "a new grammar which transcends the inherent limitations of white categories" (L. Bennett, 1972, pp. 229).

It is in this historical context that many educators in the 1960s and 1970s, disillusioned with the ability of government schools to provide a meaningful education for African Americans, left mainstream educational institutions and became the principals, teachers and founders of independent schools for African Americans. Two examples of these schools are The Chad School in Newark, New Jersey, and the Watoto School in Washington, D.C., both of which are still governed by groups that include many of their original student founders.

The Institute for Independent Education has published descriptions of over 200 independent neighborhood schools,

most of which are owned and operated by African Americans ("Directory," 1988). The Institute also has noted that both secular and religiously-affiliated independent schools focusing on African Americans continue to be formed each year. The commitment of these and many other visionaries has helped to expand the institutional base of the African-American community. Some of them also have made significant steps on their own toward the development of model curricula and pedagogy for African-centered studies.

D. The Black Studies Movement

An early attempt to develop a curriculum that is meaningful to African-American students occurred in higher education and continues to be known today as "Black studies." This movement to study the history and culture of African Americans grew directly out of student protests in the 1960s, although Turner (1984) also traces its roots to the social and cultural renaissance in the African-American community that occurred between 1918 and 1929.

On one hand, the students wanted to be taught information about their own culture and history. On the other, there was a shortage of credentialed expertise among African Americans who could teach and conduct research on the subject, and there were no departments within which these studies easily could fit. These problems were resolved by creating Black studies departments, or at least Black studies programs within some of the existing departments.

The first course was introduced in 1913 at Fisk University by George Edmund Haynes (Meier and Rudwick, 1986). Seventy-five years later, the first doctoral program in African-American history began at Temple University under the direction of Molefi Kete Asante. By 1988, over 260 universities offered programs in some type of Black studies, but only 20 percent of the nation's 105 historically Black colleges and universities offered these programs.

An exhaustive evaluation of the curricula and syllabi of Black studies programs was initiated in 1980 and completed in draft form by the Institute for the Black World (Davidson, 1989). An evaluation summary revealed that Black studies programs were

severely deficient in that they omitted some of the most important aspects of history, the political economy and culture that affected African Americans. For example, in history, Black studies curricula omitted "works by African American or Continental African historians."

Although the bibliographies which support undergraduate and graduate Black studies programs have been found wanting, a study of the evaluation process undertaken by the Institute for the Black World will reveal important assumptions that are necessary to consider as African-centered curricula and pedagogical strategies are being created for elementary and secondary schools.

In spite of these deficiencies, Turner (1984, p. xviii) notes that "there are approximately twenty serious academic journals and magazines" and "a half dozen professional associations" supporting "Africana Studies as an academic discipline."

In addition, some of the young people who led the Black studies movement in higher education during the 1960s now are parents, school administrators and university-based scholars, leading the new movement for an African-centered curriculum.

E. Elementary and Secondary Education

The trend to change the content and focus of the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools makes it possible for the first time to touch the masses. It reaches beyond what DuBois once called "the talented tenth" and beyond the select few who have been influenced directly by the "Black Studies" programs in higher education. Yet, it is this very possibility that causes many mainstream educators and politicians to feel threatened and to express their concerns.

Systematic Inclusion. Examples of the movement to introduce widespread and systematic changes in the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools spans three decades. One was a model curriculum and lesson plans for African Americans developed by the Washington Teachers Union, another was the work of individual African-American educators, and the third was an effort to expand the movement nationwide.

The Washington Teachers' Union (1968) developed lesson plans that incorporated two strategies to help children in the City of Washington, D.C., to understand better the social unrest that followed the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. First, they began to change the vocabulary being used to describe these events. They added words that had not been used before in the formal curriculum to describe conditions affecting African Americans, including "police state," "racism," "power structure" and so on.

Then they outlined an approach to American history from the Declaration of Independence through the death of Dr. King. It articulated the concept of racism, identified national and local leadership in the African-American community, and attempted to explain the meaning of the riots in the city. The union's approach resulted in immediate condemnation by journalists and educators writing in newspapers across the country.

One of many individual educators concerned with inclusion was Beryle Banfield. She wrote a "how to" guide on multicultural education which, in effect, attempted to change the center of classroom discussions to Africa and African Americans (Banfield, 1979). Emphasizing a "Black focus," her work was built on what she called "basic principles" for teaching about the African American experience. She began with pre-colonial Africa and developed a schema which explored several concepts — such as racism, institutions, communication and others — relating them to historical material on Africans and the African-American experience. She integrated these into the existing curriculum disciplines in order to develop *specific* skills in communication, critical thinking, reading, and intergroup relations.

The growing national interest among educators is best demonstrated by the National Conference on the Infusion of African and African-American Content in the School Curriculum. It was held in Atlanta, Georgia, in October 1989, and it was sponsored jointly by the Atlanta Public Schools, the College of Education of Georgia State University, and the Southern Education Foundation.

The conference presented nationally recognized authorities in African and African American studies, described existing

programs, and provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among teachers, parents and policymakers. One of the most important aspects of this conference was that it was attended by approximately 500 educators from across the country, many of whom resolved to press for infusion in their own school districts (Schmidt, 1989).

Troubled Waters. Efforts to stifle the African-centered movement actually are part of the larger assault against multicultural education and the possibility, which is disturbing to some, that the role of Western culture in education will be diminished. Examples can be found at both the national and state levels.

The first of the most recent attacks was launched by William Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education. He published his views on how the curricula secondary schools should restore the supremacy of Western thought to its former pedestal (W. Bennett, 1987). Then in an address at Stanford University (W. Bennett, 1988a), he decried efforts that would change a required course in Western culture by including writers from non-European ethnic and cultural groups. Finally, he published his views on Western thought in the elementary school curriculum (W. Bennett, 1988b).

The second major assault occurred when a task force submitted a report to the New York Board of Regents recommending that a curriculum of inclusion be introduced in New York schools (Innerst, 1990a). The board subsequently voted to revise the curriculum, although it did not adopt the task force report ("Across the Nation," 1990). This was followed by a barrage of articles by leading scholars in several major periodicals. One of several by an especially prolific scholar/writer described and critiqued numerous approaches to multicultural education and specifically denigrated the efforts of some to develop an African-centered education (Ravitch, 1990).

III. Future Possibilities

The challenge for African Americans, now and in the twenty-first century, is to construct an authentic African-centered curriculum and pedagogy for the various subjects we now teach or should teach in elementary, secondary and higher education.

What we do in the future in this regard, however, will depend on how well we apply the lessons of history in answering questions on the philosophical orientation of African-centered education, the effect of the institutional base from which it is delivered, the consultants that are used for program development, the future scholarship that is needed to promote an African-centered perspective or view of the world, and the instruments and protocols that will be utilized for assessment.

Philosophical Orientation: What will be the philosophical orientation of African-centered education?

School systems that have a predominantly African-American enrollment should develop an African-centered multicultural curriculum, rather than a Eurocentric multicultural curriculum.

We should stress that developing an African-centered view is for the purpose of correcting falsehoods that have arisen in the European-centered view, but our efforts cannot be from this defensive posture alone. Instead, we must build simultaneously an affirmative case for the universality of Africanness, constructing a set of positive values that grow out of our African birthplace and the African experience, because people of African descent must keep their center in the land, history and culture of Africa. In addition, students of European

descent can study history from the perspective of their own center in the land, history and culture of Europe, while also tracing their existence back to Africa.

Institutional Implementation: How will the institutional base in which African-centered education is delivered affect its implementation?

We must set aside some of our resources, both within and outside the tax structure, to promote independent African-American institutions.

An authentic "African-centered" curriculum may not be possible in government schools as they currently are structured, staffed and funded, or as they may be in the near future. Since mainstream public institutions cannot be the salvation for the masses of African Americans, we must recognize the need for multiple institutions, both public and private, in the search for an African-centered education.

Independent institutions tend to be smaller and provide administratively flexible windows in which innovation can occur. They are also most likely to be culturally supportive of the African and African-American experience. They are also the best points from which to define and construct authentic African-centered standards of excellence, without interference from other cultural perspectives.

Consultant Support: How can differences between consultants be normalized?

Our goal should be to work toward a unified curriculum that embraces multiple approaches to African and African-American history.

At present, the type of program actually implemented is shaped by the consultant used to assist in its development. These consultants tend to favor either the "Nile Valley" school of thought or the "Afrocentricity" approach, some combination of both, or a more mainstream approach to African-American issues that emphasizes the study of post-slavery history and embraces some or neither of the above.

Scholarship: What developments in scholarship are needed in African and African-American studies?

There are six steps that can be taken to strengthen the scholarly foundation for African and African-American studies.

First, we need to intensify the search for archaeologically-based findings about our African past.

Second, we need to stress scholarship which interprets those findings from an African-centered perspective. For example, we need to develop new African-centered translations and interpretations of extant texts from African Antiquity, instead of relying solely on the work of scholars who are grounded securely in the Eurocentric tradition.

Third, we need to increase our efforts at anthropological documentation, exploring in greater depth the concepts, values and philosophies of cultural groups in Africa, transfusing those concepts into contemporary life as Karenga and others did in the 1960s and again in 1990, and studying the larger implication of these findings on issues such as liberty, independence, market-based economics, recreation, leadership, the use of symbols in literature, and so on.

Fourth, we need to step outside the traditional Eurocentric disciplinary subdivisions in curriculum development, such as mathematics, science, arts, and language, and develop other topics, perhaps more inter-disciplinary ones that convey the cultural values we unearth in our research.

Fifth, the bibliographies constructed by the various theoretical approaches to an African-centered curriculum should be combined, updated, indexed and published so that all may share the same body of knowledge.

Sixth, current teacher-training models should be identified and described, measured against their historical foundations for completeness, and revised to be consistent with our ongoing research in content and pedagogy. In this regard, for example, we have almost completely ignored the large body of information compiled by the now defunct American Teachers Association and the examples they provided of success in teaching African-American students.

Assessment: Which instruments for measuring student achievement and teacher outcomes are useful as they currently exist, which need to be modified, and which still need to be constructed?

As we establish standards for excellence, we will identify simultaneously the elements that must be measured. Part of assessing current instruments and developing new ones will be the construction of a longitudinal database on African-American children, showing what they are capable of achieving under different circumstances with existing instruments. By comparing this information to the findings we will gather independently from history, linguistics and anthropology, we can better determine what instruments we must construct.

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